

Keeping the customer happy is what our jobs are all about

When fighting the competition war in the merchandising business, one of the best weapons to use is customer care. Customer recognition week is April 2-7. It is part of a continuing program initiated in 1983 as an effort to recognize the customer as a very important part of the business.

Board Chairman Bernard Fauber notes that the company has made remarkable strides in the customer care project during 1983 and is hopeful that during the 1984 campaign, K mart's friendly attitude will be the talk of the retail world. "Treat the customers as you would treat a guest in your home," Fauber says.

"Remember, salaries are paid by our customers," says Bob Marshall from corporate training, the department that put together the customer care program and assisted in implementing it full force in 1983. "The customer deserves our attention and they deserve our care. We still have a way to go before we reach that level of customer care that we feel is satisfactory. There are still new people in the stores that need to be taught the vital importance of customer care to customer good will."

Just what is a satisfactory level of customer care for K mart? Phil Kiraly, director of corporate training says, "When K mart provides the customer with the friendliest and best overall service of any mass merchandiser, we will consider that we have achieved our goal."

An officer at the bank reported "Eye contact, a smile, a greeting (by name if you know it) and make sure customers understand what you are saying and that you understand what they want. Whether you're dealing with people in person or over the phone, treat them the way you would want to be treated yourself."

The customer service representative added, "I try to put myself in the customer's place. Show you enjoy having them and make them feel as comfortable as possible. Show them they are more than a number; that you really care."

"Treat each person as an individual. Know your customer, find out little things about them and discuss things they enjoy."

K mart's corporate training department has put together a set of 10 commandments for better customer relations. They are as follows:

1. SPEAK TO CUSTOMERS. A cheerful word of greeting is always welcome.
2. SMILE AT CUSTOMERS. Why

use 72 muscles when it only takes 14 to smile.

3. CALL CUSTOMERS BY NAME. The sweetest music to many ears is the sound of one's own name.

4. BE FRIENDLY AND HELPFUL. If you want friends—be friendly.

5. BE CORDIAL TO CUSTOMERS. Speak and act as though everything you do—you enjoy doing.

6. SHOW GENUINE INTEREST IN CUSTOMERS.

7. BE GENEROUS WITH PRAISE, BUT CAUTIOUS WITH CRITICISM.

8. BE CONSIDERATE OF CUSTOMER'S FEELINGS. There are three sides to a controversy: yours, the other side, and the right one.

9. RESPECT THE CUSTOMER'S OPINION.

10. BE ALERT FOR OCCASIONS TO GIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE. What counts most in life is what we do for others.

In a video tape entitled "Remember Me", which K mart district managers will be showing to their stores, these points are substantiated in a way that we can all relate to. The tape stands on

the premise that we all expect good service wherever we go.

"Remember Me" shows an average consumer in various routine daily situations and depicts what type of customer service he receives in a bank, supermarket, clothing store, airport, and gas station.

The main character is shown in situations that are representative of many that we as consumers have probably been through.

He encounters problems such as salespeople who are having a bad day and take it out on the customer; salespeople who don't recognize him, even though he has been frequenting the establishment for years and he searches in vain for a salesperson to answer questions he has about some merchandise.

"Remember Me" makes the point that many times customers receive poor service and walk away saying nothing about it. Although they don't come back they make sure to tell their friends about the poor service they received! Regardless of how small an encounter may seem, each one makes an im-



Vera Payton, left, and Charlotte Mandel were chosen as 1983's Friendliest Employees of the Year at K mart 9548.

Customer service is priority for all types of businesses

The Royal Bank of Canada did a study on keeping the customers happy and their results can apply to any institution engaged in a service. The general consensus of customers polled showed that top-notch customer service is a priority to them. They like to encounter cheerful, helpful and prompt employees. They expect the employees to be knowledgeable enough to be able to advise the customers and to show the customer that they care.